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Promoting an Anti-Sandinista Alliance

The Reagan administration is actively promoting an alliance between the two major Nicaraguan counterrevolutionary factions, the Honduras-based Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN) and the Costa Rica-based Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE). Some State Department and Central Intelligence Agency officials believe that such a coalition would help portray the counterrevolution as a popular uprising rather than an attempt to restore former supporters of dictator Anastasio Somoza to power. They also see it as the best way to blunt congressional attempts to restrict U.S. aid to anti-Sandinista guerrillas. The principal obstacle to the plan has been ARDE leader Edén Pastora Gómez, the popular "Commander Zero" of the Nicaraguan revolution. Pastora has flatly refused to accept U.S. help or cooperate with the former Somocistas in the FDN. But U.S. officials now hope that the FDN's military campaign in northern Nicaragua will persuade Pastora and his allies that they have no choice but to join forces with the rival group.